

**For Immediate Release**

## **BUDGET 2017 FOCUSED ON INNOVATION: TALENT, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & BUILDING CANADA'S DIGITAL ECONOMY**

**OTTAWA, Ontario; Wednesday March 22, 2017** – Today's federal budget addresses many of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector's core recommendations to make Canada's Innovation Agenda a success, according to the Information Technology Association of Canada, the voice of Canada's ICT sector.

"Knowing the federal Government's plan for this to be an Innovation Agenda budget, it does contain a number of important measures that *address our nation's technology skills gap, bolster our ability to help innovative businesses grow and scale while strengthening Canada's ability compete digitally on the world stage*", says Robert Watson, President and CEO of ITAC.

"The devil is in the details though, so ITAC will continue to review the budget, discuss implementation with departments, distill down industry's perspective and continue this dialogue," Watson says.

We are happy to see that the Government will create *Innovation Canada* to reduce confusion and make it easier for innovators to understand and access Government-led innovation support programs. This platform will look at six innovation opportunities and we are very pleased to see digital industries is a part of it, adds Watson.

ITAC is equally as pleased to see the Government has announced \$225 million over four years to establish a new organization to support skills development and measurement in Canada. This new organization will provide the knowledge base needed to address Canada's ICT skills gap. This was a central recommendation in ITAC's 2017 pre-budget submission.

ITAC also applauds the additional investments the Government will make: to help innovative companies grow through strategic procurement, providing up to \$50 million to launch a new procurement program called Innovation Solutions Canada; encourage the development of Smart Cities, with \$300M allocated to the adoption of new and innovative approaches to city building; growing Canada's advantage in Artificial Intelligence (AI) with a \$125 million to launch a Pan-Canadian AI Strategy for research and talent; and \$1.26 billion dollars over five years for a Strategic Innovation Fund aimed at consolidating and simplifying existing business innovation programming.

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There are some initiatives outlined in the budget that ITAC looks forward to learning more about. In particular, the new Impact Canada Fund that aims to help the President of Treasury Board's mandate. A modern digital government is a critical success factor in building our digital nation and funds to help kick-start digital service experimentation across departments is welcomed.

**About [ITAC](#):** *As Canada's national ICT business association, ITAC champions the development of a robust and sustainable digital economy in Canada. A prominent advocate for the expansion of Canada's innovative capacity, ITAC encourages technology adoption to capitalize on productivity and performance. A member-driven not-for-profit, ITAC has served as the authoritative national voice of the \$170 billion ICT industry. More than 36,000 Canadian ICT firms create and supply goods and services that contribute to a more productive, competitive, and innovative society. The ICT sector generates over one million jobs directly and indirectly and invests \$4.9 billion annually in R&D, more than any other private sector performer.*

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